

Where is the Professional Naval Conversation?

The last year and a half at the Naval Institute. How USNI is reaching out to Junior Leaders.

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Read, Think, Write, and **PUBLISH**

By Admiral Jim Stavridis, U.S. Navy

**A senior commander and veteran writer encourages
Sea Service professionals to fearlessly air their
ideas in print and on the Internet.**

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing." But I would say, "Do both!" Live well, write about it, and write it well. Life in today's military certainly takes care of the "worth writing" part of Franklin's advice by providing us a broad, rich array of worthy experiences and ideas, worthy of living, but also worthy of reading, documenting, discussing, and—above all—publishing.

Much as the sea has been the inspiration for many writers—poets, novelists, journalists, even scientists—our military profession itself is a sea of inspiration. It is ever-changing, nearly boundless, often Hollywood-style exciting, and begs to be interpreted, presented, and debated. Indeed, we already have a well-established literary heritage, from purist strategy and tactics to fiction and even science fiction, but each of us has a role to play in continuing and improving on this heritage.

And it has never been easier to get started. All you need are some ideas you care about and pen and paper . . . or more likely, just a keyboard.

Something Worth Writing

All of us who have served have observed or lived something worth writing *and* something that would be good for others to read. We often express these ideas and observations in *medium dimensions*, which are critical elements

tion. In the case of widely-read journals—whether service specific like *Proceedings* or the *Marine Corps Gazette*, or broader-reaching joint or international publications like *Foreign Affairs* or the *Harvard Business Review*—your ideas can influence a great many and inspire conversations in numerous wardrooms or even academic centers, boardrooms, and cafés.

But here is the catch: your ideas will not go anywhere unless you have the courage to "hang them out there" for others to see. Publishing can be a daunting task. In our professional lives, we





JUNE 2011

The greater navy community is trying to figure out how to "get through" to a new generation of Naval Officers. Senior Naval Officers have misinterpreted a lack of new membership at USNI as a lack of desire by young officers to be a part of the conversation when the opposite is true. The rise in sites such as "Sailorbob" is evidence of this. We want to have an impact in the conversation. Senior and retired officers that I have talked to also want us to be involved. Now both sides need to find a middle ground where both sides can communicate.

There are a few myths that I would like to first dispel. We, the millennial naval officers, are in fact proud members of the community. We have many similar stories and experiences. We have deployed to the same places and have enjoyed leading sailors. We still like having a cigar on the bridge wing at sunset, we still enjoy watching a rooster tail shoot up from the back of a Destroyer and we still drink coffee to get through a long watches in CIC. However, there is one large difference. We communicate differently. The Naval Institute is asking the hard questions of why their membership is aging and the younger officers are not joining in droves as they have in the past. The answer is that there is a communication divide which has to be actively addressed. Social media and blogging sites are how our generation communicates. We are less likely to develop our ideas for a magazine where it will take two or three months to see print when we can blog it and see feedback within hours, if not minutes. The Naval Institute Blog is a great step but it needs to go further. I see two avenues that can be addressed: Wardroom Discussion pieces, and Junior Officer advancement.

First of all, direct communication with ships in the fleet about what issues and concerns are facing them in real time is how you become relevant again. The Institute should be trying to drive the Wardroom conversations like they once did. Technological advances in communication should be seen as a step up instead of a step back. Ships can now have two-way communication, while at sea, with USNI. If a controversial issue is in Proceedings, there should be a call out to ships to have wardroom conversations on the piece and provide feedback on the website. A CO should drive this wardroom conversation and be proud to have the points that were raised posted under the ship's name on the USNI website. I think that senior officers might be surprised at the results that they get back. Who knows, they might hear something new.

Secondly, while JO's are trying to get qualified they are constantly in need of professional information. "Message to Garcia" tasking comes to mind. The Institute needs to ensure that the USNI website is the place that JO's turn to for this information. Once JO's see the Naval Institute as a resource that they can use, they will also see it as something that they want to contribute to. This will drive participation in the Blog as well as the magazines.

The Naval Institute is vital to the future of the professional dialog within the navy. The millennial generation of Naval Officers wants to be a part of this dialog, and already is in its own way. The goal of the Naval Institute should be to ensure that the dialog is happening in their forums.

LT Rob McFall is a Surface Warfare Officer that spent four years on USS WINSTON S. CHURCHILL out of Norfolk, VA. He is currently stationed in Washington D.C. and is a member of the U.S. Naval Institute and the Next Generation of National Security Leaders at the Center for a New American Security.

[ADMIN Note: Tell us what you think, how the above might happen and we will engage as a staff to tell you what are trying to do internally. Also, please note we welcome guest posts]

Admiral Jim Stavridis Says:

As someone who is not a "millenial" Naval Officer, but who at times feels like I've been around a "millenium" at least, I strongly agree with Rob's ideas. And I think USNI can accomodate anonymous posts, if folks are more comfortable that way. In this turbulent 21st century, we best create security not by building walls, but by building bridges — to include between ourselves in open dialog.

June 14th, 2011 at 11:06 AM

Time of Change

Mission

To provide an independent forum for those who dare to read, think, speak, and write in order to advance the professional, literary, and scientific understanding of sea power and other issues critical to national defense.



A **Broader** Reach to enhance understanding

Proceedings
Go-to source for the media
Conferences
USNI press
Advancement of the profession
Advancement of naval professionals
Improved connection to active duty & interested civilians
Increased & broader membership
Quicker, more relevant content
Strategic and professional content

A **Deeper** Connection to our history

Naval History
Archives
Oral histories
USNI Press

Digitizing . . .

Oral histories
Back issues of Proceedings/Naval History
400,000 military photographs
Extended oral history program

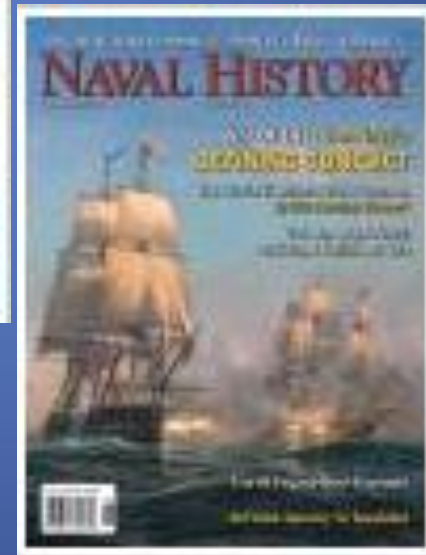
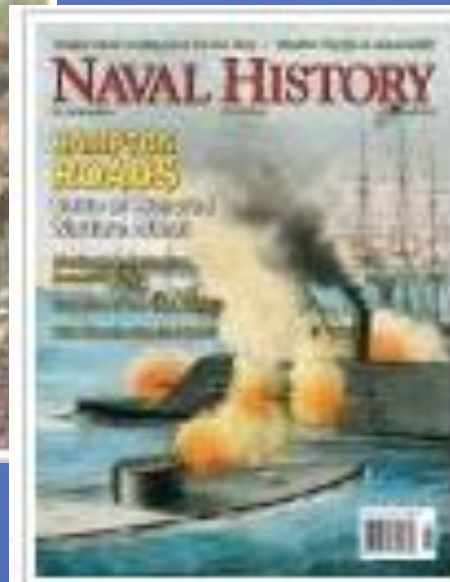
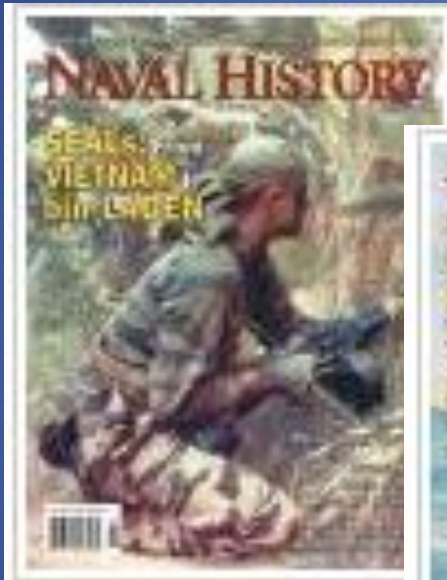
What USNI Had...

- Proceedings Magazine
- Naval History Magazine
- USNI Blog
- Naval Institute Press

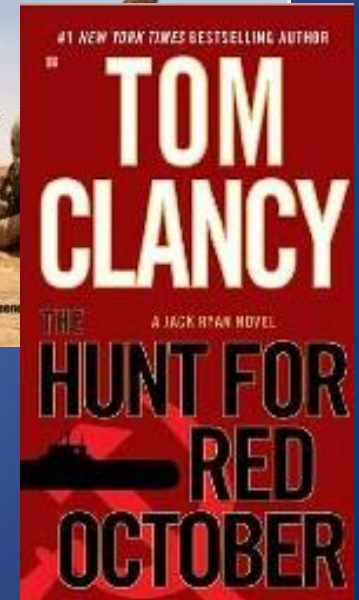
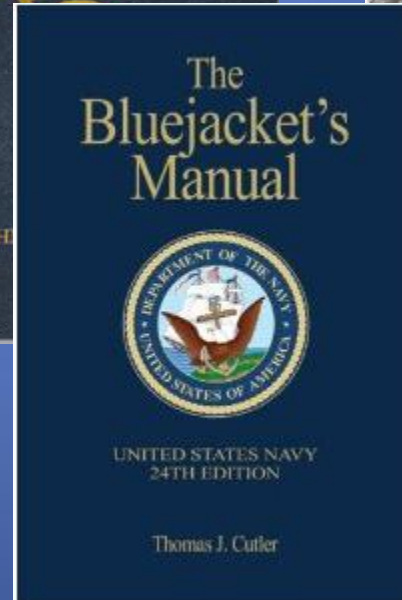
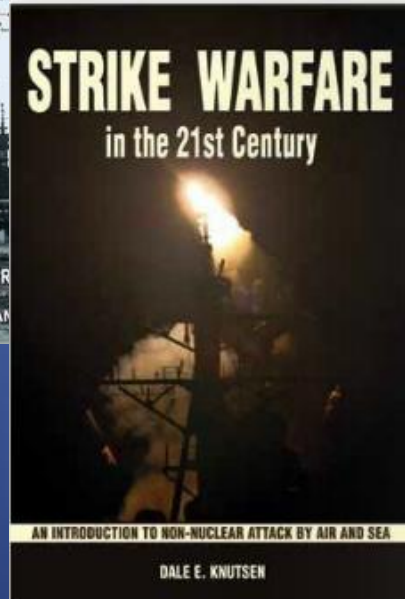
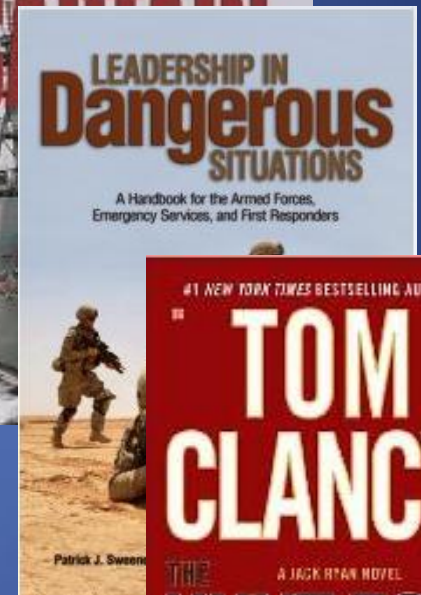
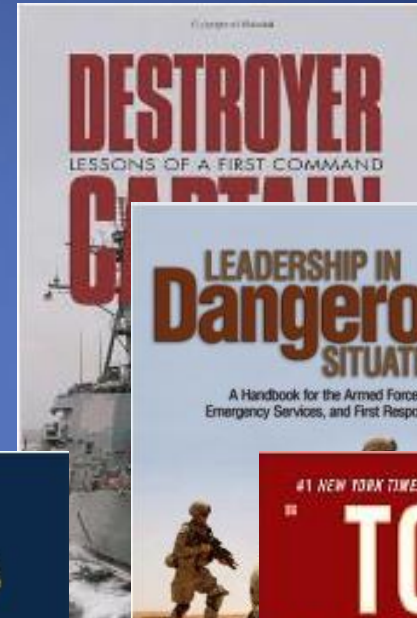
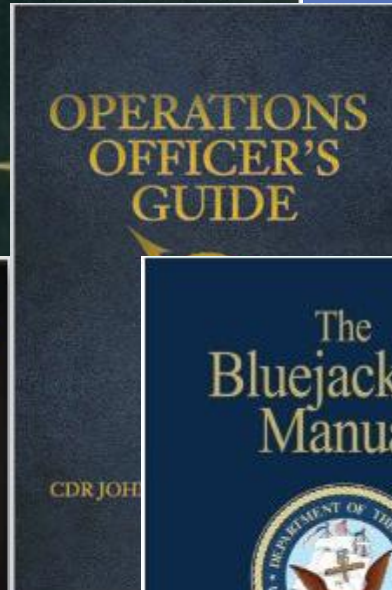
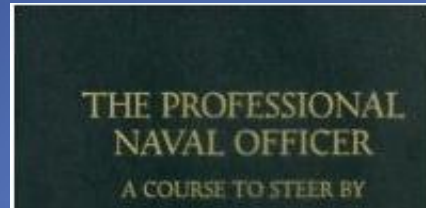
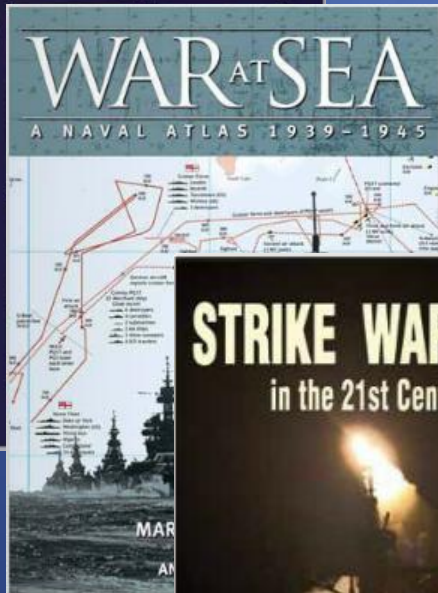
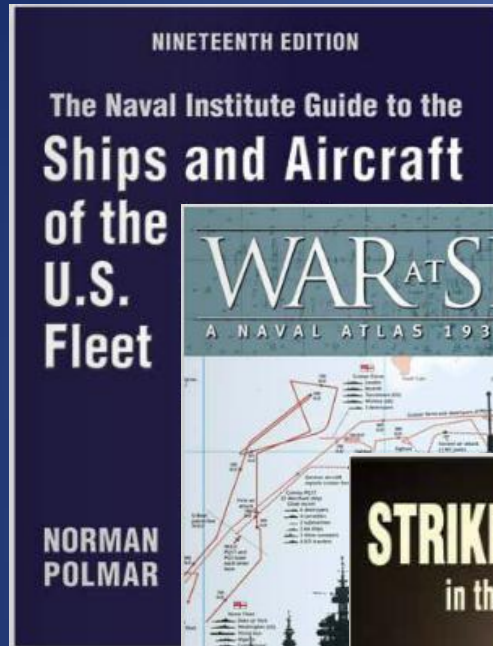
Proceedings Magazine



Naval History Magazine



Naval Institute Press



Naval Institute Blog



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30th
MAY 2012

Admiral Harvey Breaks in to the Open



We all know the phrase that nothing is more dangerous than a terminal-CDR. Ahem. Maybe

Well – all 4-stars are terminal, in a fashion – and when a 4-star is about to head out of the service at the pinnacle of their career, a cynic might look askew at last minute conversions – but I don't think that is always fair. There can be something else going on when a Admiral or General goes off the reservation; "The Craddock Effect."

In May 2009 as General Craddock was heading out the door at SHAPE, he gave a speech that said what everyone inside the lifelines knew about NATO and AFG and the story of half-truths we all sold. It was nice to hear in the open what was said behind closed doors – but one had to wonder what the impact might have had if he made the speech a year or so earlier in mid-tour – when he wasn't a lame duck – when the full truth of his opinion could have informed the public debate ... but ... it was what it was.

There is a lot to be said for working within the system. Highly successful men and women get to where they are by having a track record of "making it happen" without burning those they work for and with. They often think that once they reach a certain level – then they can make things work. It usually doesn't work that way.

When they they are running out of time or after soaking long enough that they reach a moment of clarity – often a refreshing wave of candor can come from a senior leader. It is a wave that isn't quite at odds with what they have said in the open before – but sounds more like the missing chapters of a book half read.

In that light – over at his CFFC blog, Admiral Harvey has a post out that from my perspective is, in a word; remarkable. It is somewhere between a splash of cold water and sobering slap to the face to the professional drift our Navy has been under for a decade+.

This is [Admiral Harvey](#) from his blog;

When I look at some of the big issues we've encountered over the past three years with programs such as LPD-17, Aegis 7.1.2, VTUAV (Fire Scout), and the many software programs (e.g. R-Admin) installed on our ships, it is apparent to me that we were not doing our jobs with a focus on the end user, our Sailors. In these instances, the desire/need to deliver the program or system became paramount; we did not adhere to our acquisition standards and failed to deliver whole programs built on foundations of technical excellence. Then we accepted these flawed programs into the Fleet without regard to the impact on our Sailors.



Recent Posts

- > To a Great Five Years, and Many More to Come!
- > Midrats Episode 126: "National Security in the 2012 Election" – 5pm Sunday, June 3 on Blog Talk Radio
- > Guest Post by LT Rob McFall: What the Professional Naval Conversation is Missing... Tactics
- > Admiral Harvey Breaks in to the Open
- > Ownership and Opportunities

 Pages

- > About our Guest Bloggers
- > About the U.S. Naval Institute
- > History of the U.S. Naval Institute
- > What is the Naval Institute Blog?

 Guest Bloggers

- > Adm. Jim Stavridis
- > Admiral John C. Harvey, Jr.
- > Alexander Martin
- > CDR Salamander
- > Christopher Albon
- > Eagle1
- > Fouled Anchor
- > Fred Fry
- > Galrahn
- > Jeannette Gaudry Haynie
- > Jeffrey Withington
- > John (Jack) James
- > LTJG Ryan Erickson
- > M. Ittleschmerz
- > Nathan Hughes

 Links

- > Americans at War
- > Join the Naval Institute
- > Naval History Blog
- > Naval History Magazine
- > Naval Institute Conferences

What USNI is adding

- New Website just went up in April
 - Usni.org (more interactive and searchable)
- Naval Wiki
 - Soft launch at beginning of May.
 - Constantly adding more information from USNI Archives and professional books (Blue Jackets manual, Dutton's etc.)
- News.usni.org
 - Soft launch was on Monday.
- USNI App
 - Coming next month



NAVAL WIKI
U.S. Naval Institute

Naval Institute Junior Officer Advisory Group (NJAC)

- Advise the CEO on issues that are important to the Junior Officer community
- EXCOM made up of JOs stationed in the DC / Annapolis Area
- 20 others from all over the world.
 - If you want to join let us know
- CEO would like to start an enlisted advisory group soon as well.

Innovation Requires Dialog

Find a forum that suits you

- Proceedings
- USNI Blog
- Sailorbob
- The Stupid Shall be Punished
- CIMSEC
- Information Dissemination
- Naval Wiki
- Disruptive Thinkers
- Small Wars Journal

And Join the Conversation